Cahiers victoriens et édouardiens

80 Automne | 2014
Paganism in Late Victorian Britain

Pagan Revenants in Arthur Machen's Supernatural Tales of the Nineties

Le retour du païen dans les récits fantastiques fin-de-siècle d'Arthur Machen

Sophie Mantrant

revues.org

Electronic version
URL: http://cve.revues.org/1466
DOI: 10.4000/cve.1466
ISSN: 2271-6149

Publisher
Presses universitaires de la Méditerranée

Printed version
Date of publication: 1 September 2014
ISSN: 0220-5610

Brought to you by Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire de Strasbourg (BNUS)

Electronic reference
Sophie Mantrant, « Pagan Revenants in Arthur Machen's Supernatural Tales of the Nineties », *Cahiers victoriens et édouardiens* [Online], 80 Automne | 2014, Online since 15 January 2015, connection on 18 October 2017. URL : http://cve.revues.org/1466 ; DOI : 10.4000/cve.1466

Pagan Revenants in Arthur Machen's Supernatural Tales of the Nineties

Le retour du païen dans les récits fantastiques fin-de-siècle d'Arthur Machen

Sophie Mantrant

1 The nineteenth century was marked by an upsurge of interest in the past, which became a kind of fascination with paganism in the fin de siècle. Following in the footsteps of Swinburne and Pater, late-Victorian writers were particularly drawn to antiquity and its mystery cults. Machen's first published text, a long poem he wrote at the age of seventeen, reflects the period's interest in Greek chthonic ritual.[1] The poem is entitled 'Eleusinia' (1881) and depicts the rites of Demeter's worship. A few years later, Walter Pater would stage the return of Dionysus in Medieval France ('Denys l'Auxerrois', 1886) and Vernon Lee that of Venus in contemporary Italy ('Dionea', 1890), both exploiting Heinrich Heine's theme of 'the gods in exile'.[2] Thus, pagan gods resurface in fin-de-siècle literature and the subversive potential of their return is choice material for writers of the supernatural.

2 French critic Evelyne Caron has labelled Machen's fantastic 'archeological' as it revolves around the resurgence of the past in the present. Indeed, his supernatural tales of the Nineties often stage the 'anachronistic conflict' Robert Mighall sees as the defining feature of the gothic mode, a conflict which opposes an 'uncivilised' past and the present it disrupts and disturbs. In Machen's fiction, the resurgent past is most often pre-Christian and man's pagan inheritance is presented as a terrifying, disruptive force. Among the unwelcome legacies of the past is pagan wine, which is used in dark rituals to get closer to the reality hidden beyond the veil. The sacramental use of wine in Machen's fiction must be seen in relation to his vision of the world as a sacrament, as an array of signs pointing to higher, spiritual realities. Indeed, to the mystically bent Anglo-Catholic writer, 'to make literature it is necessary to be, at all events subconsciously, Catholic' (*Hieroglyphics*, 163). In other words, it is necessary to believe that there is more to the world than what can be seen, that the universe is a tremendous mystery. In Machen's view, this sense of mystery, which he finds sadly lacking in the modern world, is shared

by both paganism and Catholicism. This leads him to the apparently incongruous statement: 'the Greeks, celebrating the festival of Dionysus . . . were all sufficiently Catholic' (*Hieroglyphics*, 160).

'The Monstrous Heritage'[3]

3 In an essay published in *Dog and Duck* (1924), Arthur Machen discusses the origin of 'fairies' and simultaneously highlights the two main anachronistic elements used in his supernatural tales of the Nineties, namely, pagan gods and a pre-Celtic race: 'In true popular tradition the fairies were always dreaded; partly because they were old gods and goddesses, accursed by the Christian faith, partly because they were the dark little people who lived in the hills and stole away the fair Celtic children from the Christian hearth' ('A Midsummer Night's Dream', 61). This view is in line with Heinrich Heine's 'Gods in Exile', whose first sentence underlines how Christianity turned heathen deities into demons. To pagan gods Machen adds the 'dark little people', an ancient race whose past existence supposedly accounts for the belief in the Tylwyth Teg of Welsh folklore. He thus subscribes to the euhemerist 'Pigmy Theory' expounded by the folklorist MacRitchie in his *Testimony of Tradition* (1890), according to which the fairies of Celtic mythology have their origins in the dwarf aborigines that inhabited the British Isles until they were driven away into remote places by the Celts. In 'Novel of the Black Seal',[4] the theory is expounded by the fictional ethnologist, Professor Gregg, who then gives it a Gothic turn of the screw: what if the ancient race had not disappeared? In Machen's 'Little People' stories, the primitive race has not become extinct: it has survived though not evolved and is still hiding in the Welsh hills. John Buchan draws on the same premise in his 'No Man's Land' (1899), where the protagonist is captured by holdovers from the Pictish race in the hills of Scotland. Machen's Little People are a race of stunted, ugly, evil creatures, whose depiction clearly echoes the fear of degeneration or de-evolution engendered by Darwinian theories. The pagan is equated with the animal and the degenerate. From this perspective, the Little People show a clear affinity with the Greek god whose shape is half-man, half-goat.

4 Among the pagan deities that have been repressed by the Christian order, the goat-footed god is given a prominent place in Machen's tales of the 1890s. 'The Great God Pan', his first major success, was published in 1894—together with 'The Inmost Light'—in John Lane's Keynote series, with a frontispiece by Aubrey Beardsley, which points to Machen's affinities with the decadent school of writing. In her study of fin-de-siècle fantastic literature, Catherine Rancy underlines that the interest in the motif reached a peak in the 1890s and she further identifies the Pan myth as typically decadent (Rancy 141-154).[5] In his poem entitled 'Pan: Double Villanelle' (1913), Oscar Wilde stresses the need for the return of the Arcadian god in the grey modern world ('his modern world hath need of thee!'), but the heathen deity, who has been demonised by Christianity, can also provoke terror. Patricia Merivale singles out Machen's novella as initiating a steady stream of 'Pan horror fiction' (Merivale 179). In these texts, the pagan god of nature returns as a diabolic creature, whose lustful and carnal dimension is often brought to the fore. Thus E. F. Benson's 'The Man Who Went Too far' (1912) ends with the beautiful young artist being trampled to death by the 'monstrous goat', in a scene with obvious homosexual undertones.[6] In Machen's 1894 novella, Dr Raymond is also a Faustian figure that goes too far in his attempt to know what lies beyond the veil of material reality. When performing

brain surgery on his young and innocent ward so that she can see Pan, he rends the veil in a transgressive act which, mythology has taught us, can only result in death or madness. The young woman does see Pan but she becomes a 'hopeless idiot' and dies after giving birth to a child, having presumably been impregnated by the goat-god. One distinguishing feature of the novella is that it clearly locates the pagan within, in the dark recesses of the mind, which the mad scientist probes: the archaeologist's shovel has become the surgeon's scalpel. As Robert Mighall points out, the body became a site of anxiety in the second half of the 19th century, as scientific discourse presented it as a possible locus for atavistic returns. The surgeon's scalpel, however, can also be seen as the stem of lilies Gabriel gives the Virgin Mary in Dante Gabriel Rossetti's '*Ecce Ancilla Domini*' (1850). Indeed, the surgical operation performed on a girl significantly named Mary is reminiscent of the Christian Annunciation, all the more so as the seventeen-year-old patient is dressed in white. Dr Raymond first cuts away a circle from her hair, described as a 'tonsure', which contributes to assimilating the operation to a Christian rite of initiation ('The Great God Pan', 7). The mother of Christ is sometimes likened to the mythological Semele, the mortal woman who was impregnated by the ruler of the Olympian gods, Zeus. This parallel is given a clear contour in Machen's novella: not unlike Semele, who dies after her lover has revealed his divine nature to her, Mary succumbs to idiocy after seeing the Great God Pan. Oscar Wilde makes this parallel between the two stories explicit in his fourteen-line poem 'Ave Maria Plena Gratia' (1878), adding a correspondence with the mythological figure of Danae.[7] But where Wilde's focus is on 'the mystery of love', Machen combines the Christian and the pagan in a disturbing alliance that turns the surgical operation into a satanic version of the Annunciation. In addition, the episode is but the starting point of a narrative whose focus is on the havoc wreaked by the unnatural child thus engendered, who turns out to be the devil incarnate.

5 The child is named Helen Vaughan, a name which sounds like faun. It is rumoured that the young woman, significantly of 'Italian appearance', goes to the woods to meet a 'strange naked man' who bears a striking similarity to the head of a satyr or a faun recently unearthed by archaeologists ('The Great God Pan', 11–12). This Roman carving is but one among many vestiges of the past that are to be found in Machen's fiction, in a clear echo of the development of archaeology in the second half of the nineteenth century. As an adult woman, Helen, the *femme fatale* with a mythological name, unveils unspeakable mysteries to several prominent London gentlemen and her revelations lead them to suicide. The sexual dimension of the initiation is suggested, but what is made perfectly clear is that the daughter of Pan presides over the orgiastic rites of a mystery cult. The sketches left behind by one of her victims show dancing fauns and satyrs in a 'frightful Walpurgis night of evil' reminiscent of Bacchanalia ('The Great God Pan', 30). Named after a Christian saint (Saint Walpurga), Walpurgis Night also refers to a gathering of witches and is often associated with the witches' Sabbath. Machen's Little People are similarly associated with abominable rites, for example in 'The Shining Pyramid' (1895), where they sacrifice on a pyre the young woman they have kidnapped. That the ceremony is a manifestation of absolute evil is made obvious: the hollow is compared to an 'infernal caldron' and the noise emitted is like 'the hissing of snakes' ('The Shining Pyramid', 93). Moreover, the animalistic dwarves, too, sometimes couple with humans, engendering hybrid creatures with reptilian features, such as Jervase in 'Novel of the Black Seal', whose body can project a slimy tentacle.

6 The staging of occult rituals and/or pagan ceremonies should be seen in light of the fascination with Satanism and black magic at the *fin de siècle.*[8] This 'deviant' interest was a manifestation of the quest for a new spirituality that marked the era. Like many late-Victorian writers, Machen looked down upon a world that had lost the sense of mystery. Dyson in 'The Red Hand' (1895) acts as a mouthpiece for the author's sacramental spirituality when he states: 'There are sacraments of evil as well as of good about us, and we live and move to my belief in an unknown world, a place where there are caves and shadows and dwellers in twilight' ('The Red Hand', 11). The supernatural tales of the Nineties focus on 'the sacraments of evil', but for the mystically inclined author the important word in what theologians call 'the mystery of iniquity (or wickedness)' is undoubtedly 'mystery'. The mystery of wine as a portal to the other sphere figures prominently in his fiction.

Pagan Wine: an Unwelcome Legacy

7 In Walter Pater's 'Denys l'Auxerrois', the reported legend starts with the discovery of a Greek coffin containing a flask that used to hold Roman wine. The narrator considers the possibility of the flask being 'the wondrous vessel of The Grail' to better highlight the difference with the sacred Christian cup: 'Only, this object seemed to bring back no ineffable purity, but rather the riotous and earthy heat of old paganism itself' (Pater 2008, 37). The return of paganism in Pater's text is initially the return of a golden age imbued with enthusiasm, yet the reader is reminded that the wine-god is 'a double creature' (Pater 2008, 43) and thus not unlike Pan, the two divinities being frequently associated.

8 Though it is very rarely mentioned in studies of Machen, Dionysus figures prominently in his non-fictional texts and also haunts the pages of his fiction, most often in the guise of wine. In many a text, wine is used in the ceremonies that bring Man closer to the other reality, be it transcendent good or transcendent evil, and thus fulfils its traditional function as a symbol of initiation and knowledge. In 'Novel of the White Powder',[9] the fateful drink is called the 'evil graal' (*The Three Impostors,* 210) in a clearly diabolic inversion of the Christian symbol. The short story shows a close affinity with Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde* in terms of plot: an overworked and rather introverted young man is prescribed a tonic to improve his health but, because the medication has been modified by age and temperature, it triggers an awful metamorphosis as Francis Leicester's body starts slowly decomposing, until only a putrid black mass is left. In Stevenson's text as in Machen's, the harmful effect of the impure drug is to take the drinker back to an earlier stage of evolution, but the reversion process reaches its extreme in 'Novel of the White Powder' as the body reverts to primeval slime. Another striking difference is that Machen's text gives much more importance than Stevenson's to the mysterious substance itself. The doctor who analyses the white powder discovers that it is similar to the one formerly used to make *Vinum Sabbati*, the sacramental wine of the Sabbath. The evil beverage is thus a resurgence of the past in the present, an 'unwelcome legacy' to use Mighall's terms. Significantly, the narrator underlines that the powder was made, not by a modern apothecary, but in an 'odd' old-fashioned shop and by an old chemist (*The Three Impostors,* 197). The powder brings back to life an ancient ceremony of which, the doctor maintains, the medieval Sabbath was but a vestige, being itself a survival of a much older 'evil science' (*The Three Impostors,* 210). This ceremony is presented as an initiation into evil during which 'the house of life was riven asunder and the human trinity dissolved,

and the worm which never dies, that which lies sleeping within all of us, was made tangible and an external thing' (*The Three Impostors,* 211). The description of the episode makes the theological framework obvious. Besides the allusion to Mark 9: 46 ('where their worm dieth not'), the description may remind one of Hebrews 4: 12, where the wrath of God divides 'asunder' 'soul and spirit, joints and marrow', in other words, dissolves the human trinity of soul, spirit and body.[10] The performance of the dark rite may thus be seen as a transgressive aping of God, which gives access to forbidden knowledge.

9 This initiation rite is duplicated on the higher narrative level in the one undergone by the young man with spectacles in *The Three Impostors* (1895). It is, indeed, one of the elements that establish a link between the embedded stories told by the eponymous impostors and the main story, that of Joseph Walters, which is related at the end of the novel. In the pocket book that is found after his death, the young man reveals that he went through an initiation rite orchestrated by the malevolent Lipsius. The mysterious man seduces Walters with his praise of individual freedom and the joy of living, which results in the young man coming to view existence 'with the eyes of a pagan'. Paganism at this stage is equated with the joys of a life dedicated to 'the science and art of pleasure', as Lipsius calls it in typically decadent terms (*The Three Impostors,* 220). The initiation rite, however, figuratively brands Walters with the Devil's mark. The first stage is drinking a red wine that brings back to the surface what has long been buried underneath, the 'thing' that had so far lain dormant: 'the stuff boiled in my veins and stirred, I think, something that had slept within me from the moment I was born' (*The Three Impostors,* 222). Then the young man takes part in the re-enactment of an ancient orgiastic mystery: 'I mingled in the horrible sport, and watched the mystery of Greek groves and fountains enacted before me' (*The Three Impostors,* 222). The wine that figures so prominently in Walters's initiation rite is significantly called 'the wine of the fauns', the same kind of wine Lucian Taylor, the decadent artist, drinks in the Roman world his imagination has built (*The Hill of Dreams,* 154). Fauns are associated with the goat-god Pan, but they are also often conflated with satyrs, the followers of the Greek god of wine. A link may be established with the hybrid creature that wreaks havoc in 'The Great God Pan', Helen Vaughan/Faun. As underlined before, Helen is the daughter of a Semele-like mortal woman and thus may also be seen as a female incarnation of Dionysus, the son of Semele by Zeus. Among the paraphernalia of the seductress is a beverage that is allegedly a thousand years old and thus another survival from the past. The wine of Vaughan is thus another wine of the faun and the *femme fatale* is a poisonous woman who corrupts men, body and soul.

10 The 'infernal' sacraments are plainly evil versions of the Holy Sacrament, the Eucharist.[11] This resemblance is made particularly obvious in 'The White People' (1902), where bread is used as well as wine in the strange ritual performed in the Welsh woods. Seen through the prism of the naive narrator, a young girl, the ceremony seems harmless enough, were it not for the mention of people mysteriously disappearing:

> . . . they passed the bread and the wine round and round, but they tasted quite different from common bread and common wine, and changed everybody that tasted them. Then they all rose up and danced, and secret things were brought out of some hiding place, and they played extraordinary games, and danced round and round and round in the moonlight, and sometimes people would suddenly disappear and never be heard of afterwards, and nobody knew what had happened to them. ('The White People', 84)

11 The transformation brought about by the bread and wine is thus itself transformed into a joyful game, in a tale written by a girl who sees no evil. The maenads' ecstatic frenzy or

drunken rapture, which sometimes resulted in the killing of other human beings, becomes mere pagan gaiety. The choice of a child's point of view may be seen as a way of returning to a more 'primitive' vision of the Dionysian mysteries, one that has not yet turned them into diabolic rituals.

12 The sacramental use of wine in Machen's tales of the Nineties reveals the transcendent reality behind the veil as dark and frightening, but the focus later shifts to what Dyson calls 'sacraments of good' ('The Red Hand', 11). In other words, Machen explored the two facets of the double-natured god, who may symbolize both regression to primordial chaos and spiritualization through mystic union.

'By Wine Is Man Made Divine'

13 Machen's fictional output is very often divided by critics into two categories, which have been called 'tales of horror' and 'tales of joy'.[12] Chronologically the shift occurs at the end of the Nineties, after Wilde's trial. In his 'second period', Machen continues using the same symbols but gives them a positive rather than a negative value. The key word becomes ecstasy, and wine is quite often used as a symbol of this uncommon, extramundane experience. Thus, in the later texts, the sacramental use of wine is in keeping with the praise of the Dionysus/Bacchus *cultus* that is found in such non-fictional texts as *Hieroglyphics* (1902),[13] where Machen expounds his views of literature, and the autobiographical *Far Off Things* (1922). In the latter, for example, Machen writes: 'For the Ancient Greeks truly taught us that man was raised from the brutish to the spiritual state by Bacchus, the giver of the vine' (*Far Off Things,* 138). Antiquity is here presented as a wiser age whose myths should be seen as hinting at higher truths. Within the myth, wine is a symbol of the knowledge provided by spiritual elevation. The portrait of Dionysus that is drawn here is closer to Pater's description of the wine-god as the 'god of enthusiasm, of the rising up on . . . spiritual wings' (Pater 1895, 11). This view is inextricably linked with the idea of mystic intoxication or inebriation, which opens the door to another world, the world of the gods or of the higher realities. In Machen's view, Rabelais had intuitively got hold of the important truth conveyed by the Dionysus myth when he praised wine in *Pantagruel* and had the priestess Bacbuc claim, in the Fifth Book, that by wine man is made divine (*Hieroglyphics,* 114). That the subject interested him deeply is highlighted by the fact that he spends no less than thirteen pages discussing the use of wine in Rabelais, also including considerations on the use of punch in Dickens. Like their ancestors in antiquity, both authors recognized the supreme importance of spiritual ecstasy, and made wine/punch its symbol.

14 Although sacramental wine appears mostly in the guise of the 'evil graal' in the supernatural tales of the Nineties, the texts provide glimpses of Dionysus's other face. The amateur sleuths that investigate the strange occurrences are sometimes shown drinking wine to the point of slight inebriation. These episodes may be put in parallel with the absorption of strange beverages during the initiation rites that are described or hinted at within the same texts: they are the other, less obvious side of the coin. Indeed, the way the episodes are described suggests the performance of a secret ceremony. In 'The Encounter of the Pavement', for example, Machen inserts a reference to the dark place where the wine is hidden: 'The waiter was summoned, and descended through a trap-door in the floor of the dark apartment, and brought up the wine' (*The Three Impostors*, 115). Moreover, the two drinkers are sitting in a garden-like courtyard in the

middle of London, a beautiful enclave of nature complete with blooming flowers, glossy creepers and a trickling fountain. In 'Novel of the Black Seal', the narrator makes a striking lexical choice when underlining that the Burgundy wine, described as 'curious', begins its 'incantations', which evokes a magical ceremony. The two men start 'glowing', the verb 'glow' being very often used by Machen in his description of the transfiguration triggered by ecstasy (*The Three Impostors,* 155). In addition, it is strongly suggested that the drinkers of 'common' wine are granted intimations of another world, that wine brings them closer to hidden realities. Thus, in 'The Great God Pan', after drinking a bottle of Chianti, Villiers stands for a while on the pavement 'thinking what a mystery there is about London streets and the companies that pass along them'. More important, perhaps, is the fact that inebriation is also presented in this passage as a source of creativity: 'A bottle of red wine encourages these fancies, Clarke, and I dare say I should have thought a page of small type, but I was cut short by a beggar' ('The Great God Pan', 21). In an even earlier text, 'The Lost Club' (1890), inebriation is equated with a withdrawal from the common life and the surge of the creative impulse. By wine man is made a writer:

> As they came out into the quiet street smoking vast cigars, the two slaves to duty and 'legal business' felt a dreamy delight in all things, the street seemed full of fantasy in the dim light of the lamps . . . 'You know, old fellow,' he [Phillipps] said, 'there are times when a fellow feels all sorts of strange things—you know, the sort of things they put in magazines, don't you know, and novels. By Jove, Austin, old man, I feel as if I could write a novel myself'. ('The Lost Club', 109)

15 Interestingly, Phillipps does not invoke the Christian god, but the pagan Jove. As for Dionysus, he appears here as the god of inspiration.

16 It is important to remember that Machen saw ecstasy as the source of writing: the writer is one who has felt the presence of the invisible world and who sets out to transmit his feeling of ecstasy through the medium of literature. The text he writes is a linguistic analogue of the world, an array of signs that hint at higher truths or a veil that both hides and reveals: 'For literature, as I see it, is the art of describing the indescribable; the art of exhibiting symbols which may hint at the ineffable mysteries behind them; the art of the veil, which reveals what it conceals' ('Beneath the Barley', 10). This veil is also the sacramental veil of the Eucharist, which both contains and conceals the divine reality. Indeed, Machen very often uses Eucharistic imagery in his reflections on the art of literature. In *Hieroglyphics*, he calls the pure emotion felt by the writer the Idea, using, as he often does, the Platonic term to refer to the other reality. He then calls it the 'shining substance', 'made incarnate' in plot, construction and style, which are the 'accidents'.[14] The distinction between substance and accident is fundamental to the Catholic rite of transubstantiation. The same type of lexicon appears when Machen discusses style, which he describes as 'the outward sign of the burning grace within' (*Hieroglyphics*, 39), a description that clearly echoes the definition of a sacrament in *The Book of Common Prayer.*[15] In his *Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899), Symons uses the image of the Eucharist to describe the work of the artist, a chalice in which the 'wine has been made god'. Machen's view of literature indeed echoes the widespread late nineteenth-century vision of art as a religion 'with all the duties and responsibilities of the sacred ritual' (Symons 9).

17 In *Hieroglyphics,* Machen's persona states: 'You will find that books which are not literature proceed from an ignorance of the Sacramental system' (161). The Welsh author can in no way be suspected of such ignorance, as is evidenced by the sacramental use of wine in his fiction. In his tales of supernatural horror, pagan wine functions as a portal to another sphere, to the awful reality that lies behind the veil. Later in his career, the

Christian symbol of the Grail takes centre stage, as a means of access to a paradisiacal world beyond. One is reminded of Baudelaire's 'Le Voyage' (1859), in which the destination does not matter as long as one leaves the known world behind and finds something different and new: '*Plonger au fond du gouffre, Enfer ou Ciel qu'importe? / Au fond de l'inconnu pour trouver du* nouveau!' Machen's entire output revolves around the idea of reaching out to a different reality, one that may often be seen as the world of imagination. This interpretation is put forth in *The Secret Glory* (1922),[16] where a character who bears the same initials as his author, Ambrose Meyrick, writes in praise of inebriation a text which the narrator reads as 'an impassioned appeal for the restoration of the quickening, exuberant imagination, not merely in art, but in all the inmost places of life' (122): in other words, as an impassioned plea for the re-enchantment of the world.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

CARON, Evelyne. 'Structure et organisation de quelques thèmes dans les œuvres d'Arthur Machen'. *Littérature* 8 (décembre 1972): 36–40.

IMKO, Victor. 'Pan and "Homosexual Panic" in Turn of the Century Gothic Literature'. *Chrestomathy* 12 (2013). http://chrestomathy.cofc.edu/documents/vol12/imko.pdf January 25th, 2014.

LOUIS, Margot K. *Swinburne and His Gods: The Roots and Growth of an Agnostic Poetry*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 1990.

------. *Persephone Rises, 1860-1927: Mythography, Gender and the Creation of a New Spirituality*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2009.

MERIVALE, Patricia. *Pan The Goat-God: His Myth in Modern Times*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1969.

MACHEN, Arthur. 'The Great God Pan' (1894), 'The Shining Pyramid' (1895), *The Three Impostors* (1895). *The Three Impostors and Other Stories*. Ed. S. T. Joshi. Oakland, CA: Chaosium, 2001.

------. 'The Red Hand' (1895), 'The White People' (1904). The White People *and Other Stories*. Ed. S. T. Joshi. Oakland, CA: Chaosium, 2003.

------. 'The Lost Club' (1890). *The Terror and Other Stories*. Ed. S. T. Joshi. Oakland, CA: Chaosium, 2005.

------. *The Hill of Dreams.* 1907. *The Great God Pan and The Hill of Dreams*. Mineola, NY: Dover, 2006.

------. *Far Off Things*. New York: Knopf, 1922.

------. *The Secret Glory*. New York: Knopf, 1922.

------. *Hieroglyphics, a Note upon Ecstasy in Literature.* 1902. New York: Knopf, 1923.

------. 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'. *Dog and Duck*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1924. 57-62.

------. 'Beneath the Barley'. 1931. *Eleusinia and Beneath the Barley*. West Warwick, RI: Necronomicon, 1988.

MASUREL-MURRAY, Claire. *Le calice vide; l'imaginaire catholique dans la littérature décadente anglaise*. Paris: Presses Sorbonne nouvelle, 2011.

MIGHALL, Robert. *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction: Mapping History's Nightmares*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999.

NASH, Bertha. 'Arthur Machen among the Arthurians'. *Minor British Novelists*. Ed. Charles ALVA, Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1967. 109–20.

PATER, Walter. 'A Study of Dionysus' (1876). *Greek Studies*. London: Macmillan, 1895. 1–48.

------. 'Denys l'Auxerrois'. *Imaginary Portraits.* 1886. Rockville, MD: Arc Manor, 2008. 31–50

RANCY, Catherine. *Fantastique et décadence en Angleterre, 1890–1914*. Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1982.

SYMONS, Arthur. *The Symbolist Movement in Literature.* 1899. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1919.

WILDE, Oscar. 'Ave Maria Plena Gratia' (1878), 'Pan: Double Villanelle' (1913). *Oscar Wilde; Complete Poetry*. Ed. Isobel MURRAY. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997.

NOTES

1. See, in particular, Margot K. LOUIS, *Persephone Rises, 1860–1927: Mythography, Gender and the Creation of a New Spirituality*. As an adolescent, Machen was an ardent admirer of Swinburne and he was undoubtedly influenced by the Proserpine poems of *Poems and Ballads* (1866).
2. Heinrich Heine's seminal essay, 'Die Götter im Exil', was published in 1854.
3. The phrase is borrowed from Henry James's 'The Last of the Valerii' (1885), in which the Count states: 'I have fumbled so long in the monstrous heritage of antiquity'.
4. 'Novel of the Black Seal' is one of the tales in the episodic novel *The Three Impostors* (1895).
5. Catherine RANCY draws on Patricia MERIVALE's thorough and detailed study of the Pan myth in modern times.
6. In the late nineteenth century, the Pan motif is often associated with homosexual desire. See for example Victor IMKO, 'Pan and "Homosexual Panic" in Turn of the Century Gothic Literature'.
7. Danae was impregnated by Zeus in the form of a shower of gold. For further analysis of the superimposition of the three figures in Wilde's poem, see Claire MASUREL-MURRAY, *Le calice vide* (140–41).
8. The decadent French author Huysmans, in particular, is famous for his depictions of black masses or evil spells.
9. Like 'Novel of the Black Seal', 'Novel of the White Powder' is one of the tales in the episodic novel *The Three Impostors* (1895).
10. Hebrews 4:12 reads: 'For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and is a discerner of thoughts and intents of the heart'.
11. One may again detect the influence of Swinburne. For a thorough analysis of Swinburne's demonic Eucharist see Margot K. LOUIS, *Swinburne and his Gods* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990).
12. Bertha NASH, for example, uses this distinction in 'Arthur Machen among the Arthurians'.
13. The text was published in 1902 but written in 1899, the year when Symons published his *Symbolist Movement in Literature*.
14. He adds: 'the finest literature must have its accidents–it cannot exist as shining substance alone' (*Hieroglyphics,* 57).

15. The Catechism of *The Book of Common Prayer* reads: '*Question*. What meanest thou by this word Sacrament? / *Answer*. I mean an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us'.
16. Machen finished writing the novel in 1908, but it was not published in its entirety until 1922.

ABSTRACTS

In his *Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction* (1999), Robert Mighall presents 'anachronistic conflict' as the defining feature of the mode. The resurgence of pagan gods and the discovery of a fossil race are the two main triggers of such a conflict in Arthur Machen's supernatural tales of the Nineties. The aim of this paper is to explore how the horrifying returns articulate with the Anglo-Catholic writer's sacramental worldview, focusing in particular on the use of the wine symbol in his texts. The Dionysian theme reverberates throughout Machen's fiction, where the double-natured god may induce either debasement or elevation. In both cases, sacramental wine enables man to partake in the reality that lies beyond the veil of appearances.

Dans *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction* (1999), Robert Mighall fait du 'conflit anachronique' le principe structurant du mode gothique. Dans les récits fantastiques écrits par Arthur Machen à la fin du siècle, ce conflit est provoqué par la résurgence de divinités païennes ou par la découverte d'une race fossile aux rites barbares. Cet article étudie la façon dont ces résurgences maléfiques entrent en résonance avec la vision sacramentelle de l'auteur anglo-catholique, en s'intéressant en particulier au symbolisme du vin dans sa fiction. Le thème dionysiaque parcourt toute l'œuvre de Machen, où le dieu peut signifier tout autant la régression que l'élévation. Dans les deux cas, le vin sacramentel permet à l'homme de participer à une autre réalité.

INDEX

Mots-clés: anachronisme, cultes à mystères, Dionysos, extase, Eucharistie, Graal, mythologie celtique, sacrement
Keywords: anachronism, Celtic mythology, Dionysus, ecstasy, Eucharist, Grail, mystery cults, Pan, sacrament.

AUTHOR

SOPHIE MANTRANT

Sophie Mantrant is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Strasbourg, where she teaches British and American literature. Her research interests are centred on fantastic literature, with a particular interest in the late 19th century. She has published a number of articles on turn-of-the-century gothic fiction and is currently writing a book on the work of Welsh author Arthur Machen.

Sophie Mantrant, agrégée d'anglais, est maître de conférences à l'université de Strasbourg, où elle enseigne

la littérature (britannique et américaine). Ses recherches portent principalement sur la littérature fantastique, à laquelle elle a consacré sa thèse de doctorat, ainsi que plusieurs articles. Elle s'intéresse plus particulièrement au tournant du XIX^e^ siècle et travaille actuellement sur l'œuvre de l'auteur gallois Arthur Machen.